

VICARIOUS TRAUMA- DON'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

Tifanie Petro, MS
Director of Advocacy and Prevention



TYPES OF STRESS



POSITIVE

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

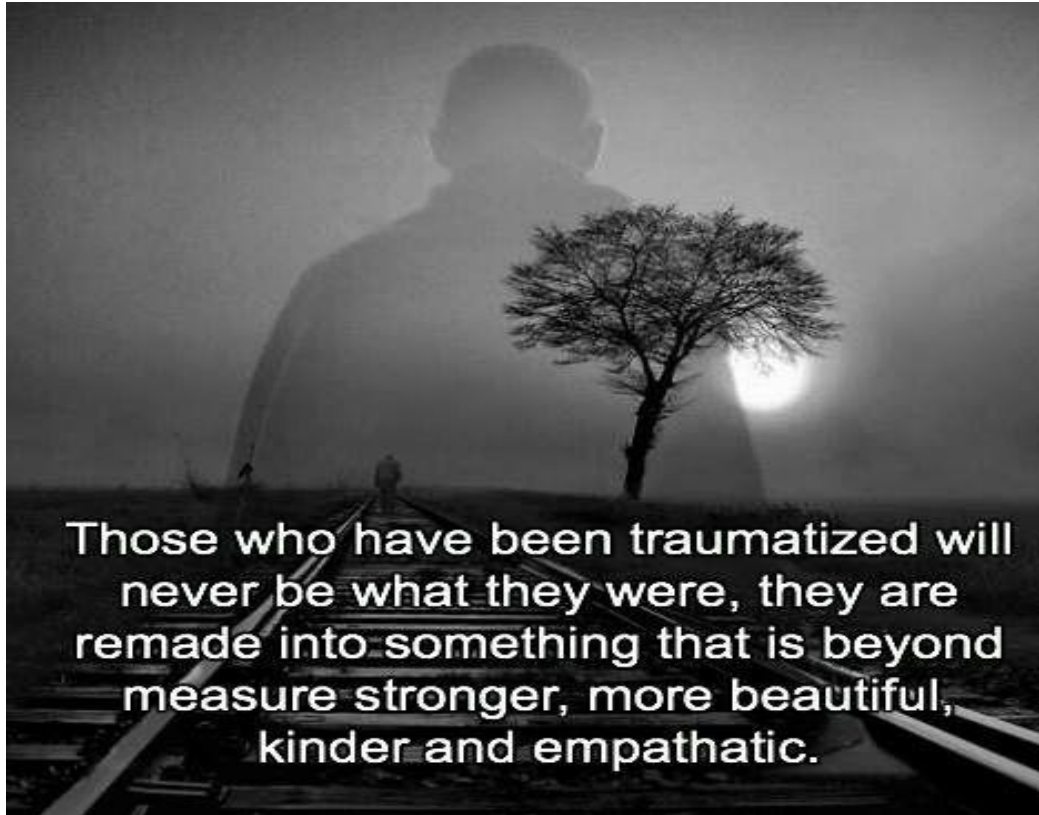
TOLERABLE

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC

Prolonged activation of stress
response systems in the absence
of protective relationships.

Trauma Is...?



Those who have been traumatized will never be what they were, they are remade into something that is beyond measure stronger, more beautiful, kinder and empathetic.

Vicarious Traumatization is a transformation of the helper's inner experience resulting from empathic engagement with another's trauma.

Secondary Traumatic Stress:	Vicarious Trauma:	Burnout:
<p>Aka Compassion Fatigue.</p> <p>Emotional duress resulting from hearing about firsthand trauma experience by another.</p>	<p>Changes in the inner experience of the clinician resulting in empathizing with a traumatized individual(s).</p>	<p>Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced feelings of accomplishment. Results from general occupational stress with or without trauma exposure.</p>

WHO'S AT RISK?

- ◉ Lawyers
- ◉ Doctors
- ◉ Mental Health Professionals
- ◉ Teachers
- ◉ Rescue Workers
- ◉ Judges
- ◉ Job Placement Professionals
- ◉ Police Officers
- ◉ Middle Management
- ◉ Nurses
- ◉ Financial Advisors
- ◉ Journalists
- ◉ Hospice Workers
- ◉ Parole Officers
- ◉ Clergy
- ◉ Occupational Therapists
- ◉ Paralegals
- ◉ Bankers
- ◉ Volunteers
- ◉ Physical Therapists
- ◉ Insurance Claim Agents
- ◉ Social Workers
- ◉ HR Professionals
- ◉ Friends
- ◉ Commissioners
- ◉ Therapists
- ◉ Custody evaluators
- ◉ CPS workers
- ◉ Public service workers
- ◉ **Anybody who's breathing....**

WHY DOES VT HAPPEN

- Empathy for others
- Moving quickly from trauma to trauma
 - Loss/grief
- Unresolved Personal Trauma
- Children are Most Vulnerable
- Isolation and Systematic Inequalities
- Lack of Resources
- Comparison/minimization

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Low motivation/decreased work performance
- Addictive/unhealthy behaviors
- Feeling trapped/hopeless
- Diminished joy
- Rigidity in life
- Irritability
- Loss of sleep
- Improper responses

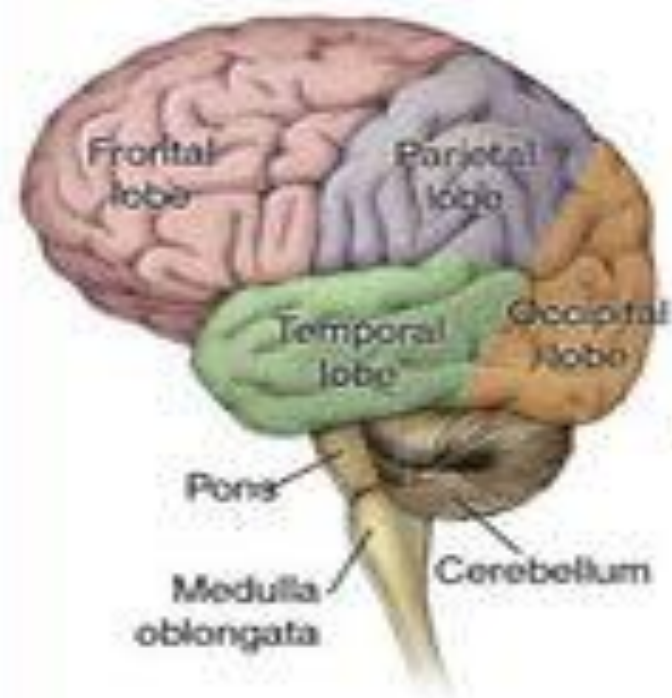


WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?

- Heart rate increases
- Dissociation versus arousal
- Increase in relationship stress
- Escalation in behaviors
- Lack of self-regulation
- Somatic complaints
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of focus

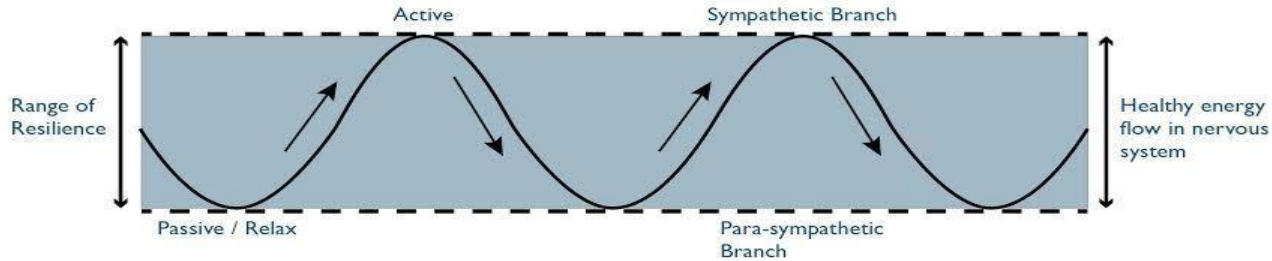
**I respond to text messages in my head.
Sometimes weeks go by before I realize
I didn't respond in real life.
I'm working on that.**

Anatomy of the Brain

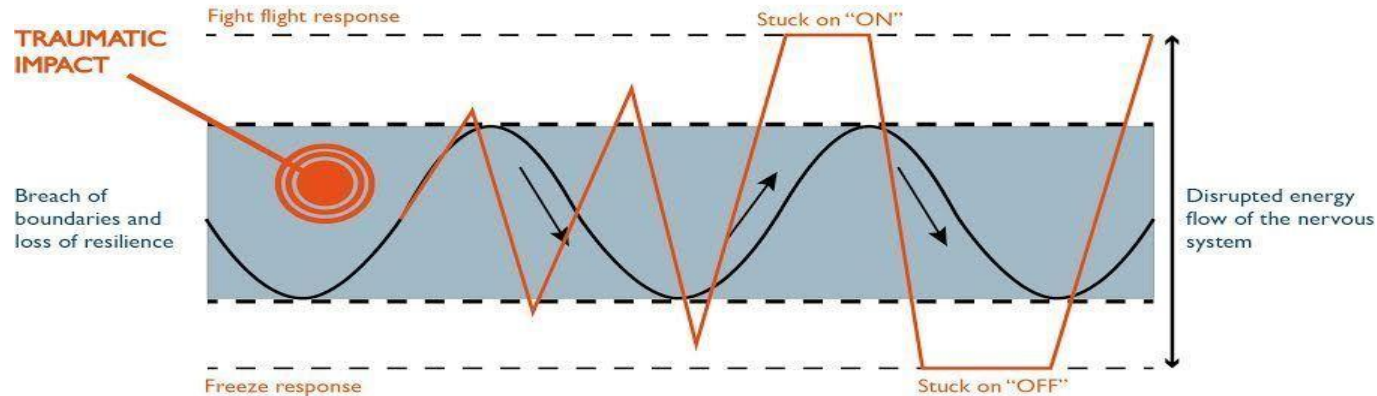


TOXIC STRESS...IN THE LONG RUN

This represents a healthy nervous system:



This is what happens when we go through Trauma:



SO WHAT?

Health Issues

Irritability

Depression/
Anxiety

Self-Harm/
Thoughts

Concentration



Poor Job
Performance/ Loss

Risk Taking
Behaviors

Addiction/Self-
Medication

Loss of family/friends

Trauma Exposure = Vicarious Trauma

```
graph TD; A[Trauma Exposure = Vicarious Trauma] --> B[Change in World View]; A --> C[Spectrum of Responses]; C --> D["Fixed/Rigid<br/>Vicarious Traumatization<br/>Secondary Traumatic Stress<br/>Compassion Fatigue"]; C --> E[Neutral<br/>Impact Managed Effectively]; C --> F["Growth<br/>Vicarious Resilience<br/>Vicarious Transformation<br/>Compassion Satisfaction"];
```

Change in World
View

Spectrum of Responses

Fixed/Rigid

Vicarious Traumatization
Secondary Traumatic
Stress
Compassion Fatigue

Neutral

Impact Managed
Effectively

Growth

Vicarious Resilience
Vicarious Transformation
Compassion Satisfaction

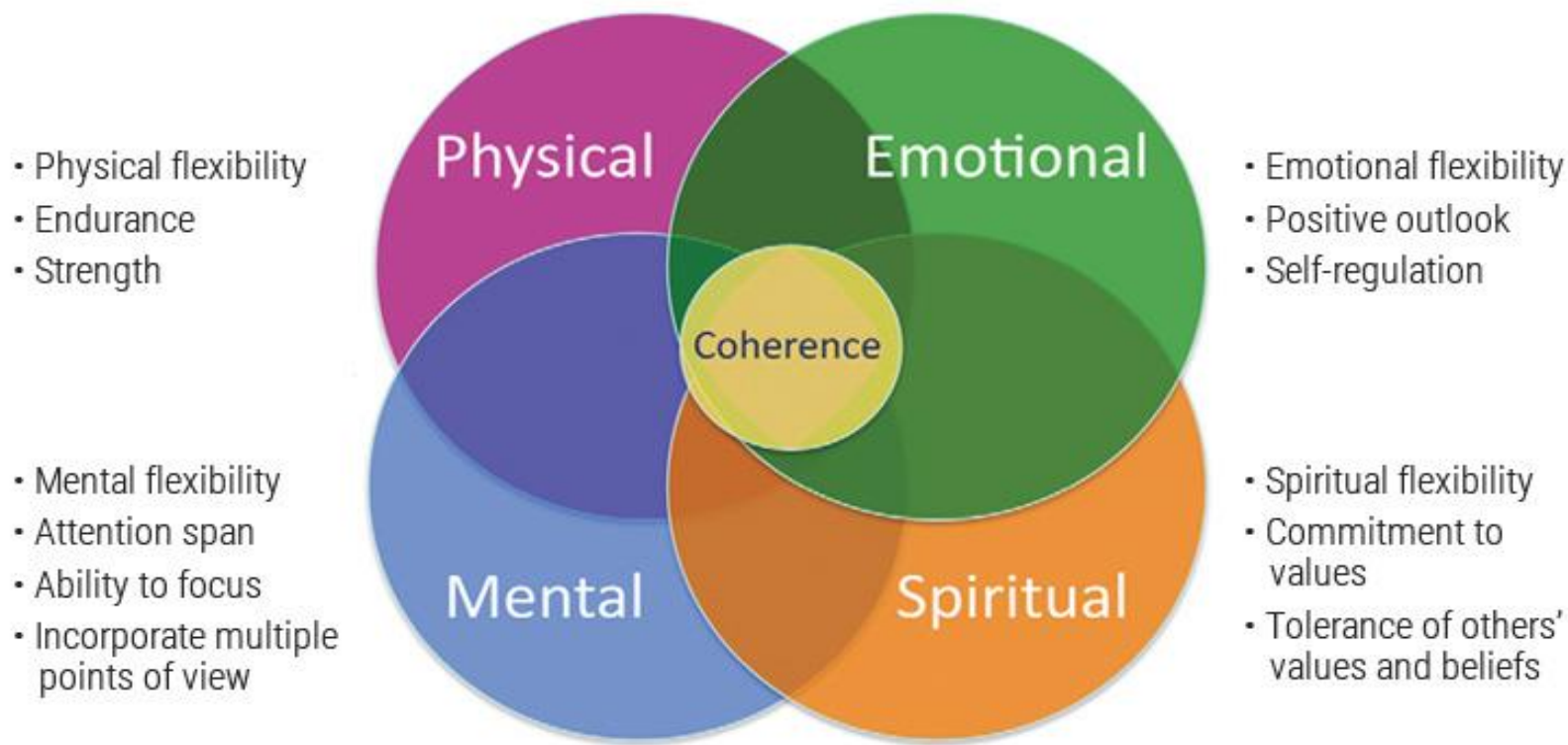
RESILIENCE



HOW DO WE HEAL?

Compassion Fatigue:	Vicarious Trauma:	Burnout:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxation• Building & Maintaining Relationships• Sharing Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness• Balance• Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxation• Self-Regulation• Changing Perceptions• Increased Work Support

Domains of Resilience



ABC'S OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA PREVENTION

- ◉ Awareness
- ◉ Balance
- ◉ Connection
 - Professional
 - Organizational
 - Personal

S.E.R.V.E

- ◉ Share that the behaviors are normal for abnormal stress (Symptom Normalization)
- ◉ Educate about stress in the brain and the body (Amygdala, Cortex, Fight/Flight, Freeze)
- ◉ Regulate the body and mind (Mastery over states of arousal and black/white thinking)
- ◉ Validate anger and grief
- ◉ Empower the self that lies beneath

RESILIENCE BASICS

- Self - evaluation
- “Get Real”
- Set boundaries
- Start small
- Stay organized
- Set realistic expectations
- Stay positive/laugh



PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

Focus on your body and senses

Useful for:

- ⦿ dissociation
- ⦿ anxious feeling
- ⦿ feeling disconnected with your body

PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

For Immediate Grounding:

- ⦿ 5 long, deep breaths
 - in through nose, out through mouth
- ⦿ Focus on relaxing muscles
 - start from the top of your head down to your toes
- ⦿ Stretch, touch objects around you, wash hands
 - focus on the sensations in creates in your body

PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

For Long Term Resilience Building:

- Nutrition / Exercise
- Breathing exercises
- Rest
- Social connections outside of work
- Volunteer work
- Community Involvement
- New Hobbies
- Vacation
- Take your breaks

MENTAL STRATEGIES

Focus and activate your mind to cope with feelings of anxiety, distress, or discomfort while remaining present.

MENTAL STRATEGIES

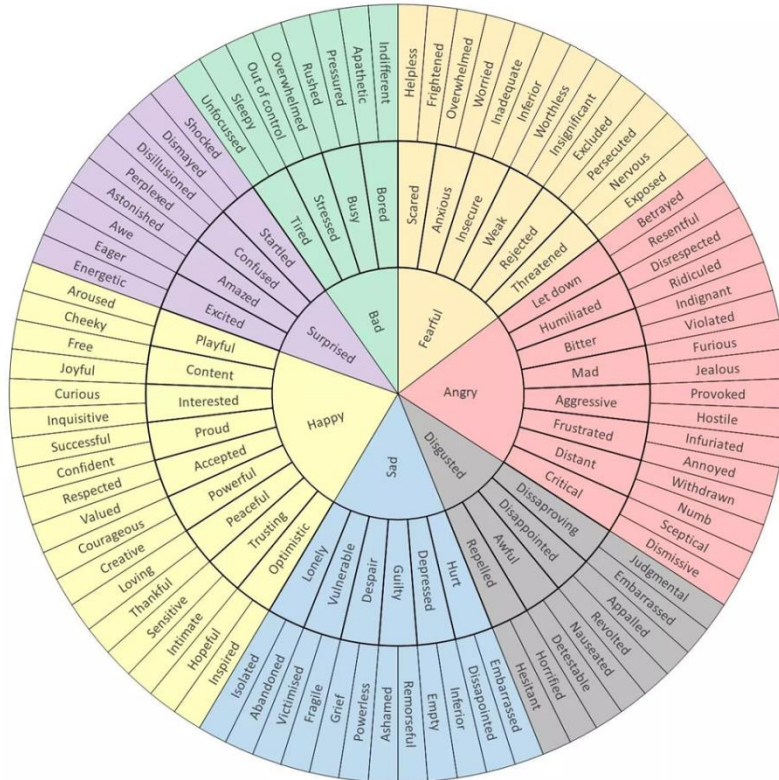
For Immediate Grounding:

- ◉ Describe your environment in detail
- ◉ Name all the objects around you
 - Colors, sounds, smells, textures
- ◉ Picture a safe place and focus on the details
- ◉ Read a sentence or repeat the alphabet
 - S...l...o...w...l...y or backwards

EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES (SOOTHING)

Focus and activate your mind to
increase relaxation and feelings
safety and comfort.

MARC BRACKETT - R.U.L.E.R



- Recognizing
- Understanding
- Labeling
- Expressing
- Regulating

Yale Center for
Emotional Intelligence

EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

For Immediate Grounding:

- ◉ Think of your favorite season, song, movie, person, etc.
- ◉ Keep a collection of inspiring or comforting poems, lyrics, or quotes
- ◉ Write kind notes to yourself
- ◉ Give yourself a hug for 2 minutes and repeat a kind phrase or coping statement

EMOTIONAL / MENTAL STRATEGIES

Build up your protective factors

- ◉ Self-awareness
- ◉ Ask for help
- ◉ Keep the balance
- ◉ Personal strategies
- ◉ Open to learning and growing
- ◉ Expression of feelings / mindfulness

SPIRITUAL/ CULTURAL CARE

- ◉ Prayer
- ◉ Meditation and Listening (solitude)
- ◉ Fasting
- ◉ Worship
- ◉ Stewardship
- ◉ Service
- ◉ Confession
- ◉ Guidance
- ◉ Celebration
- ◉ Spending time in nature

MAINTENANCE

- ⦿ Practice, practice, practice
- ⦿ Do what works for YOU
- ⦿ Set small, manageable goals
- ⦿ Do something in each area
- ⦿ Ask for help: support person/group

CREATING A SELF-CARE SAFETY PLAN

- ◉ What are at least two ways you can identify when you are not managing your stress well?
- ◉ If you are having a hard time managing your stress (experiencing vicarious trauma, burnout, or just having a tough day) who can you reach out to at work?
 - Who can you reach out to outside of work?
- ◉ What is one area you can practice caring for yourself better emotionally?
- ◉ What is one area you can practice caring for yourself better physically?
- ◉ What is one area you can practice caring for yourself better spiritually (this is defined by you, not anyone else, each person's spiritual choices are their own and are a personal choice)
- ◉ How will you know if you are doing better, identify at least two things that will improve if you are coping better?

Tifanie Petro
tifanie.petro@chssd.org
605-716-1628

